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THE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE

OF

FAITH

IN

THE DEITY OF CHRIST.

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MANY persons who profess Christianity, and are ready to acknowledge the truth of its doctrines, appear, nevertheless, to entertain the notion that the deeper and more mysterious parts of the system are in their nature speculative, and have little claim to be prominently brought forward. Such a notion is often applied, in particular, to the doctrine of the Deity of Christ.

Were such a sentiment well founded, it would appear to follow, that much time and attention could not be rightly devoted to the confirmation of that doctrine ; for nothing can be deemed substantially valuable in any religious system, which does not truly promote the welfare of man and the glory of God. To the intelligent observer, however, it must appear, even at first sight, little short of an absurdity, on the one hand to confess that this doctrine has been revealed, and on the other, to imagine that it has no practical bearing.

No one surely who forms a tolerably correct estimate of the character of the Divine Being, as displayed in providence and in Scripture, can for a moment suppose that he has revealed any part of his truth for the mere purpose of gratifying a speculative curiosity, or that he has made known to us more of the secrets of his own nature and counsels than was necessary for our regeneration and redemption. Without dishonouring God, the all-wise Author of the Christian dispensation, we cannot entertain the belief, that the "light of the knowledge" of his "glory in the face of Jesus Christ," has been bestowed upon us for any less worthy purpose, than that of leading us onward in the

paths of piety and virtue, to eternal happiness. Since, then, the doctrine of the Deity of Christ forms a part of that system of the truth which is clearly revealed to us in Scripture, we may rest assured, on the general principle now stated, that the belief and cordial reception of it, on our parts, must be of some decided use in promoting our religious welfare.

In point of fact, however, this statement is far below the truth. A more particular consideration of the subject will serve to convince us, that such a faith is *absolutely essential* to the religion of the Christian; that it is of peculiar and pre-eminent importance to all his highest interests and dearest hopes.

I. Were we asked for a brief definition of the Christian dispensation, we might describe it as a *scheme, appointed in the wisdom and love of God for the salvation of mankind*. It may be presumed that all who acknowledge the truth of our religion, would be prepared to accept such a definition. Uniting, as all professing Christians do, in ascribing Christianity to God, they cannot fail to allow that, in an especial manner, it bears the impress of his wisdom and his love. Neither can it be denied that it is a scheme; a whole made up of parts; a plan, whether more or less complex, harmoniously adjusted to some particular end. And further; that this end, as far as relates to mankind, is their salvation, is a truth which in the New Testament is always supposed, and frequently proclaimed. "These things I say," cried Jesus to the Jews, "that ye might be saved."^a The apostle Paul, on one occasion, calls the gospel the "word of salvation,"^b and on another, "the power of God unto salvation."^c The grace revealed in the gospel, "is the grace of God that bringeth salvation."^d The Scriptures which unfold Divine truth are "able to make wise unto salvation."^e The end of our faith is the "salvation of our souls."^f

The term salvation is of a most comprehensive character, embracing all the blessings which the Christian derives from his religion; immunity from condemnation, freedom from sin; grace here, and glory hereafter. We cannot, however, form an adequate estimate of its meaning, without taking a view of the evils and miseries from which we are

^a John v. 34.

^d Tit. ii. 11.

^b Acts xiii. 26.

^e 2 Tim. iii. 15.

^c Rom. i. 16.

^f 1 Pet. i. 9.

to be saved. We must call to mind that a deep moral degeneracy has overtaken us ; that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,”^a and is “become guilty before God ;”^b that in our fallen state we are “lost” sinners,^c sitting “in darkness and in the shadow of death,”^d “children of wrath,”^e under the curse of the law and condemned by its sentence ; “the soul that sinneth, it shall die ;”^f finally that in this our depraved condition, we are under the dominion of Satan ;^g and, except we repent, must have our part in “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”^h Such is the dark and enslaved condition, and such the miseries present and future, from which deliverance is offered to us in the gospel. And this deliverance, together with the glorious gift of eternal life,ⁱ constitutes SALVATION.

II. Having made these remarks on the end proposed by Christianity, it will not be irrelevant, that we should shortly glance at the nature of the scheme, by which that end is accomplished.

It may be observed, that in the system of truth revealed to us in the New Testament, we find an authoritative republication of the moral law, far exceeding in fulness all former publications of it. We find this law embodied for our instruction in the example of the Lawgiver himself. And, in connexion with the code and the pattern, we find a clear enunciation of our responsibility to God, of our resurrection from the dead, and of future, eternal rewards and punishments.

Now, were it true that repentance, by itself, can deliver us from the guilt of past sins ; and were it also true, that we are capable of repenting, and of afterwards walking according to the law of God, in our own strength, we may presume, that such a revelation of our duties and prospects would have been all that we required ; that by furnishing us with adequate information and motives, this part of the scheme of Christianity would have sufficed for our salvation.

But Scripture and experience unite in proving, that neither of these things is true. In the first place, we know that under the moral government of God, even in this world, repentance does not obliterate sin or prevent the

^a 1 John v. 19.

^b Rom. iii. 19.

^c Matt. xviii. 11. 1 Tim. i. 15

^d Luke i. 79.

^e Eph. ii. 3.

^f Gal. iii. 13. Ezek. xviii. 4.

^g Eph. ii. 2.

^h Matt. xxv. 41.

ⁱ Rom. vi. 23.

suffering which follows it ; and in the Bible, the principle is clearly laid down that “ without shedding of blood is no remission.”^a And secondly, since man, in the fall, is declared to be radically corrupt—a declaration corresponding with known facts—we may rest assured, that he is neither able nor willing to repent of his sins, or to obey the law of God. Guilty and helpless as we are, we can entertain no well-founded hope of future happiness, without an atonement for our sins, and without the operation of some mighty principle, by which we may be recovered from our sickness, restored to communion with God, and prepared for immortal joy in his presence. What cause for thankfulness then is it, that in the Christian dispensation all our need is supplied ; that the Scriptures reveal to us, not only a perfect law, exemplified by as perfect a pattern, and confirmed by the sanction of future rewards and punishments, but above all, a SAVIOUR, through whose atoning blood we may obtain forgiveness, and through whose efficacious Spirit we may both repent and obey !

The moral law is preserved in the Christian religion, just as the tables of the covenant, inscribed with the ten commandments, were kept uninjured within the inclosure of the ark ; but if we are asked, What is the gospel ? we must answer, Not the promulgation of this moral law, but *the glad tidings of redemption through Jesus Christ* ; the “ record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.”^b

In order, therefore, to form a just notion of the scheme which God has appointed for our salvation, we must extend our views far beyond the merely moral and preceptive parts of the system : we must call to mind, that God so loved our lost world, as to bestow upon it his only begotten Son. Respecting Him who was thus freely given to us, the Scriptures testify, that he was in the beginning with God, and was God ; that by him all things were created in heaven and in earth ; that he was the Light and Life of men ; that in the fulness of time, he was sent of the Father into the world ; that he was made flesh, or took our nature upon him, being conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin ; that he went about doing good, and showed forth his Divine power by many wonderful works ; that he died

^a Heb. ix. 22.

^b 1 John v. 11.

on the cross, as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; that on the third day he rose again triumphant over death, hell, and Satan; that he ascended into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; that in this his exalted condition, he is both our Advocate with the Father, and the Supreme Governor of his church; that he sends the Comforter to his disciples, even the Holy Ghost, who effects our conversion and sanctification: finally, that he will come again in glory, raise the dead to life, judge all men according to their works, and bestow upon his faithful followers a happy immortality.

On the whole, then, it is evident, that the offices and acts of the Son of God are so far from forming a secondary, or even a merely constituent part of the scheme of Christianity, that they are the medium through which the whole dispensation passes. Through this channel alone flows that glorious broad stream of mercy and truth, which originates in the love of God our Father, and terminates in the salvation of his creature, man. The Deity of the Son—his union and co-operation, in the eternal Godhead, with the Father and the Holy Ghost—is no merely collateral or ornamental circumstance, it is the very life and substance of the whole system.

III. Such being the plan ordained by God for our salvation, the question immediately arises, How are we to avail ourselves of its provisions? To this question, true philosophy presents a ready answer—“*Through faith.*” Since it has been demonstrated to our reason, that God has revealed to us a system of truth for our salvation, reason itself proclaims that we must be saved through the operation of that principle in the mind, by which alone revealed truth is accepted and appropriated. Now that principle is belief or faith.

On this subject the declarations of Scripture are abundant and explicit. “The just shall live by faith.”^a “Without faith it is impossible to please God.”^b We are “justified by faith.”^c “By grace are ye saved through faith.”^d Believers “are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.”^e “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye pros-

^a Hab. ii. 4. Gal. iii. 11.

^b Heb. xi. 6.

^c Rom. iii. 28.

^d Eph. ii. 8.

^e 1 Pet. i. 5.

per.”^a The Israelites “could not enter” into the promised land, “because of unbelief,” and the “word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”^b Neither can we enter into the kingdom of heaven, or derive benefit from the gospel, except we believe it. “Without” are the “abominable and murderers;” and also, “the fearful and unbelieving.”^c “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”^d Now although it is clearly true, and nothing more than plain reason, that men cannot be saved by the means of an outward revelation, if they do not believe and accept it, it ought not to be forgotten, that in these and other passages of Scripture, the disbelief of the gospel is condemned as a moral delinquency. Such declarations are aimed against the “evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”^e They presuppose a fact of the highest importance, namely, that the light of revelation is accompanied by such evidences of its Divine origin, as cannot fail to satisfy the impartial inquirer. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”^f

On every ground therefore, both natural and moral, and especially from the multiplied declarations of Scripture, it appears to be a clear point, that those to whom the gospel is revealed, and who nevertheless reject that gospel, are excluded from the benefits which it is intended to convey. But the question more peculiarly before us is this: Whether we have any reason to suppose, that it suffices for the purpose of our salvation, that we should acknowledge, in general terms, the Divine origin of the Christian revelation, and yet believe and accept only a part of that which is revealed? Or more particularly, Whether we can be regarded as possessing a saving faith in Christianity, if we believe its contents, so far as relates to its moral code, a resurrection from the dead, and judgment to come, but deny the Lord who bought us; reject the record, that God has sent his ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into the world, to assume our nature, atone for our sins, and redeem us from all iniquity.

^a 2 Chron. xx. 20.

^c Rev. xxi. 8.—*comp.* xxii. 15.

^e Heb. iii. 12.

^b Heb. iii. 19. iv. 2.

^d Mark xvi. 15, 16.

^f John iii. 19.

In reply to these questions, it may, in the first place, be remarked, that the scheme of religion unfolded in the New Testament, although composed of many parts, is a perfect whole, and is directed as a whole, to the great end of our salvation. If then, we accept it only in part, it follows that, as far as we are concerned, we shall undermine its strength, and defeat its operation. And secondly, it is evident, that in rejecting the Divinity, incarnation, and atonement of Christ, we reject precisely that part of the system which is most essential in the plan of redemption, and upon which all the other parts may be said to depend. It is also that part of the system, which is placed the furthest beyond the scope of human wisdom, and which is therefore the best adapted to bring into exercise the acceptable principle of faith in God. Here it is that our faith is tried. And here it is also, that our faith is triumphant. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the SON OF GOD?"^a

On these grounds it is only reasonable to conclude, that if, while we profess a belief in Christianity, we yet reject its peculiar doctrines, we are in the utmost danger of excluding ourselves from its saving operation, and therefore from its promised benefits. But a disbelief "*in the name of the Son of God*," like that of the gospel generally, is condemned by our Lord as an immorality—as a punishable and mortal sin. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD."^b

IV. This remark naturally leads to another view of the subject, the consideration of which will afford full confirmation to our present conclusions. In the scheme of the gospel, Jesus Christ HIMSELF is the Saviour, and therefore HIMSELF the object of saving faith.

A beautiful light is thrown on this branch of the argument by a comparison of the Old and New Testaments. In the former, we often read of persons who were raised

^a 1 John v. 4, 5.

^b John iii. 17, 18.

up by the hand of Divine Providence, to save the people from their enemies. But God himself is ever described as the Author even of these deliverances, and in a higher and more spiritual sense, he repeatedly declares himself to be the only Saviour. "I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, THY SAVIOUR....I, even I, am the Lord, and BESIDES ME there is NO SAVIOUR."^a And as the Israelites were taught to look upon Jehovah as their only Saviour, so was he ever proposed to them as the only object of a religious and saving faith. Those who trusted in any arm of flesh were cursed. None were in the way of life and salvation, but those whose primary reliance, for every blessing, was exclusively fixed on the living God.

In the New Testament, God is unfolded to us in that mysterious union, of which there are many indications even in the Hebrew Scriptures, the union of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who co-operate in the mighty plan ordained for our salvation, and who are therefore the joint and inseparable objects of the Christian's faith.^b Nevertheless, since the whole dispensation is conducted through the Son; since God was in him, "reconciling the world to himself;"^c since he alone was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;"^d it is the SON to whom, in an especial manner, are ascribed the name and character of a SAVIOUR. He is the "Saviour of the world,"^e "the Saviour of the body," that is, "of the church,"^f "our great God and Saviour."^g Nor is the salvation which he bestows, of any inferior or secondary nature: it is incomprehensibly great; it is spiritual; it is eternal.

In perfect conformity with this doctrine, Jesus Christ presents himself to his disciples, as a lawful and necessary object of saving faith. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."^h "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst....Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting

^a Isa. xliii. 3. 11. Hos. xiii. 4.

^c 2 Cor. v. 19.

^e John iv. 42. xii. 47.

^g Tit. ii. 13.

^b Matt. xxviii. 19.

^d Rom. iv. 25.

^f Eph. v. 23.

^h John iii. 16.

life. I am that bread of life.”^a “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”^b Since, then, according to the dictates both of reason and Scripture, God alone is the object of saving faith, which is an essential part of Divine worship, such declarations must be regarded as containing a strong collateral evidence of the Deity of Jesus Christ; and in practice, it is *utterly impossible*, while we reject that doctrine, *so* to believe or trust in Christ, as these passages enjoin. That this is the fact, will be made clear to every serious Christian, by reflection on his own experience, and on the particular *bearings* of his faith in Christ.

We trust in Christ, as the *atonement for our sins*; and although we are aware that he died on the cross as *man*, yet our reliance on him for redemption through his blood, is necessarily connected with the truth, that he is not man *only*. We believe that we are forgiven all our iniquity, because a sacrifice has been provided for us of infinite worth and dignity; because ours is a Redeemer, *omnipotent* to deliver us from the curse of the law, and to bear on himself the sins of the whole world.

We trust in Christ as our advocate with the Father, our only Mediator; and while we freely confess, that, for this his gracious office that human nature was essential in which he is our sympathizing High Priest, we are deeply sensible, that his mediation is rendered availing for all its lofty and comprehensive purposes, only by his essential *oneness* with the Father—his eternal Deity.

We trust in Christ as our inward Teacher, and our supreme spiritual Ruler. Although assured, therefore, that, even in his reign of glory, he continues to be man, our faith must needs embrace his Deity; for in this alone, he can bestow the gifts and graces of his Spirit, to enlighten, sanctify, and govern his church universal.

We trust in Christ as the Judge of quick and dead; and while we acknowledge that all judgment is committed unto him, “*because he is the Son of man*”^c—a signal indication of the Divine equity—yet are we sensible, that it is his *God-head* which qualifies him for the office; and we bow down

^a John vi. 35. 47, 48.

^b John xi. 25, 26.

^c John v. 27.

before him in the firm conviction that he knoweth all things, and is the Searcher of all hearts.

Finally : we trust in Christ as the Lord and Giver of life, and while we remember, that in order to purchase it for us he “ took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,” yet in looking to him for the free gift of a glorious immortality, it is impossible for us to forget that he is truly God.

V. The preceding remarks may serve to show that a belief of the Deity of Christ is not only inseparably connected with the Christian’s *experience*, but is essential to the *general maintenance of his creed*. That this is true, however, is still more clearly proved by the notorious fact, that a denial of that doctrine is ever accompanied by a corresponding degeneracy of religious sentiment, in relation to other important particulars in the system of Christianity.

Those who allow that God was manifest in the flesh—that the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON was clothed with humanity, and died on the cross to save us—are naturally impressed with the malignity of sin and with the weight of its eternal consequences, which called for such a surrender, for such a sacrifice. But to the unbeliever in the Deity of the Son of God, sin is no longer a mortal offence against a Being of perfect holiness. It assumes the softer name of “ moral evil.” The existence of it is ascribed to the Creator himself, and in connexion with its punishment, it is even regarded as forming one part of a providential chain, which is destined to terminate in the happiness of the sinner. Satan is transformed, from the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, the deceiver, accuser, and destroyer of men, into a harmless metaphor, a mere figure of poetry. Hell of course loses its deepest terrors, and is treated of, not as a place of eternal punishment, but as one of temporary and corrective suffering ; a purgatory provided in mercy, rather than ordained in judgment.

With these unscriptural views of sin, its author, its origin, and its effects, is inseparably connected a partial and inadequate estimate of *the law of righteousness*, which sinks down from the high and consistent level, maintained in scripture, of *universal godliness* ; and while it still borrows something from hristianity, gradually assumes the shape of a worldly, though plausible, moral philosophy.

Since man is no longer regarded as a fallen and lost

creature prone to iniquity and corrupt at core, but as a being essentially virtuous, it is plain that he can no longer be considered as standing in need of redemption. That word may indeed, in some metaphorical sense, find its way into the creed of those persons who reject the Deity of Jesus Christ. But the doctrine of *pardon through faith in his blood* is dismissed as unnecessary and absurd: unnecessary, because we are not under the curse of the law; absurd, because it is inconceivable that a mere man, "weak and peccable like ourselves," could possibly atone for the sins of the world.

In like manner, the doctrine of a spiritual influence, freely bestowed by a glorified Saviour for our conversion and sanctification, is discarded as untenable. On the one hand, such an influence is not thought necessary; on the other, the greatest of merely human prophets can have no power to bestow it. Since, indeed, the Divine character and inward operation of the Holy Ghost are intimately connected, in the system of revealed truth, with the Deity and atonement of Christ, it naturally follows that the latter doctrines cannot be forsaken, without the surrender of the former. In point of fact, they usually disappear at the same time, or in rapid succession, from the creed of the sceptic.

Lastly, since the Bible has explicitly declared the several doctrines to which we have alluded, its plain declarations (in order to meet these novel views) must now be interpreted, as harsh, unnatural metaphors—as strained, oriental figures. Hence its authority is gradually weakened, and although perhaps it is still allowed to contain much true history and some Divine doctrine, it descends from its lofty station of a volume truly "given by inspiration of God." No longer are its contents food for daily, pious meditation; no longer is it the test by the simple application of which all questions in religion must be tried and determined. On the whole, revelation is marred, and religion becomes a wreck. Man is left to the perilous guidance of his own perverted reason, and must steer his course through the ocean of life without a rudder.

It may perhaps be objected that the degeneracy of religious sentiment, to which we have now adverted, attaches chiefly to the lowest grade of faith in relation to the person of Christ; and this is certainly true. Nevertheless it is, in various degrees, the inevitable accompaniment of

every system which does not include the doctrine of his Deity; and the lower we fall in our estimate of HIM, the greater and more conspicuous this degeneracy becomes. The lines which separate the different classes of persons who reject the Deity of Christ, are of a finite breadth and easily passable. The broad impassable distinction, the infinite difference of opinion, lies between those who confess their Saviour to be God, and *all* who regard him only as a creature.

On the whole, it appears,

First. That Christianity is a scheme ordained in the wisdom and love of God for our *salvation*; that is, for such a recovery from a fallen and lost condition, as will ensure our eternal happiness.

Secondly. That this scheme contains, not only a moral code with the revelation of future rewards and punishments, but provisions for our *redemption* through an incarnate and crucified Saviour; and that of these provisions his Deity is the very life and substance.

Thirdly. That we are saved *by faith*; and that our faith, in order to be saving, must embrace the whole scheme appointed for our salvation; more especially that it must be directed to those parts of it, which are at once peculiar and fundamental.

Fourthly. That Jesus Christ, as being himself the Saviour of the world, is the proper *object* of saving faith; and that such a faith in him, with a view to his various offices in the economy of grace, cannot be maintained without the belief of his Deity.

Fifthly. That the whole argument is confirmed by that general degeneracy of religious sentiment, with which the denial of this doctrine is universally accompanied.

We conclude, therefore, that the Deity of Jesus Christ is so far from being a merely speculative point, which may be laid on one side and disregarded with impunity, that a heartfelt reliance on its truth is essential to that great purpose for which Christianity itself was instituted—the salvation of our never-dying souls.

“We are all by nature the children of wrath.”^a Here is *the disease*. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.”^b Here is *the remedy*. How clearly consequent, and yet how awful is *the alternative*—“He

^a Luke xii. 48.

^b John iii. 36.

that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the WRATH OF GOD abideth on him!"

To work out our salvation, with a view to the glory of God as well as to our own happiness, is to fulfil the chief and noblest purpose of our being. But in order fully to appreciate the *practical* nature of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, we must call to mind that the salvation which is obtained through faith in these doctrines, is commenced and carried forward in the present life, and involves amongst other things, our *moral regeneration*. Every one who is accustomed to trace the lines of Christian experience, must be aware that the application to ourselves, through faith, of that redemption which came by the Son of God, is the very means ordained by our heavenly Father, *for our recovery from a sinful condition, and for our restoration to the image of our Creator*. Thus it is, and thus only, that we can "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."^a

In order to confirm this general remark, we may briefly advert to a few distinct points, in regard to which a belief in the Deity of Christ is essential to the formation of the *Christian's character*.

I. The first point is *humility*. The dignity and worth of Him whom God has given to redeem us from sin, are the true gauge by which we must measure our own demerits, and the depth of our corruption in the fall. A deliberate consideration of the justice and holiness of God, who ordained the incarnation and atoning death of HIS OWN SON, as the only means through which the sinner might be justified, lays open to us an astonishing view of the high demands of his law, of his abhorrence of sin, and of the greatness of our own sinfulness. Such a view alone affords the means of a radical cure of the worst and most prevalent of moral diseases—*self-righteousness and pride*.

Those who imbibe the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, and heartily embrace that system of truth with which it is

^a Eph. iv. 22—24.

connected, can scarcely fail to be made sensible that all their own "righteousnesses are as filthy rags;"^a that a load of guilt rests upon them, in their fallen state, from which they cannot possibly deliver themselves; and that they are destitute of all power of their own to walk in the way of holiness. Thus are they humbled before the Lord, and their humility lies at the root of their regeneration. It leads to that abiding dependence on Christ for forgiveness, and on the Holy Spirit for illumination and sanctification, by which alone they can be established in a sober, righteous, and godly life. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."^b

II. The second point alluded to is *love*. Persons who form a low estimate of their sins, and imagine them to be of slight consequence and easily passed over, may talk, in a latitudinarian manner, of the benevolence of God; but they must ever be destitute of a proper sense of his mercy. They are sure to exemplify our Lord's own maxim that "to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."^c But let our sinfulness be estimated by its true measure, the infinite dignity of Him who covers our iniquities and redeems us from their power, and we shall then be prepared to apprehend what is the greatness of the mercy of our God, what the tenderness of his unmerited compassion. Being forgiven much, we shall love much.

There is, however, a yet more direct and palpable reason, why sound opinions respecting the person of Christ are of essential importance for the production of love to God, namely, that *the greater the gift the more the gratitude*. "We love" God, "because he first loved us;"^d and our love to him will always be in some degree proportioned to our perception of the greatness of his love towards us. Now, "in this was manifested the love of God towards us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."^e Thankful we ought unquestionably to be to our heavenly Father, for the communication of his truth to us through the instrumentality of a prophet; but how are our feelings of gratitude exalted, when we call to mind, that under the

^a Isa. lxiv. 6.

^b Gal. ii. 20

• Luke vii. 47.

^d 1 John iv. 19.

^e 1 John iv. 9.

Christian dispensation, he has bestowed upon us, not merely a human prophet, but a Divine, omnipotent Redeemer; that he “spared not HIS OWN SON, but delivered him up for us all!”^a Surely then, the faith which embraces the Divinity and atonement of Christ, is in a pre-eminent degree, a “faith which worketh by love.” It contemplates the most cogent of all proofs, and the most sublime of all examples, of the love of God towards man: it calls on the heart of the believer for a corresponding completeness of love towards God, and by the most delightful of motives, it constrains the creature to submit himself without reserve to the will of the Creator.^b The love of God, thus formed in the soul of the believer, is, indeed, the spring of every other virtue; of self-denial, purity, and temperance; of patience and resignation, of meekness and charity.

Charity, or love, it must be confessed, is a virtue of peculiar value; for the whole moral law is “briefly comprehended” in these two sayings, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;”—and “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*”^c It is no uncommon thing for persons who entertain low views of Christian doctrine, to insist on the latter of these “great commandments” in preference to the former, and to plead for benevolence at the expense of piety. “I am a man, and indifferent to nothing that concerns man,” is indeed a sentiment which even idolaters could utter, and which happily corresponds with a very common emotion of the mind of man. Although, however, this emotion may perhaps be regarded as the best relic of our original virtue, it will never, of itself, enable us truly to obey this second commandment. The strength of the charity here enjoined upon us, lies in the renunciation of self; and no man can fulfil this law, according to the mind of the Lawgiver, whose whole heart is not primarily surrendered, in love, to God. When our first affections have been taught to flow, in an undivided stream, towards God, the Author of our redemption, as well as of our being, we are prepared by an influence, infinitely purer and stronger than the most amiable natural impulse, to love our neighbour *as ourselves*. Then do we learn to renounce our own interests for the sake of others, and to embrace in the arms of charity our enemies as well

^a Rom. viii. 32.^b Rom. xii. 1.^c Mark xii. 30, 31.

as our friends. Then are we impelled to labour not merely for the temporal advantage and civil improvement, but above all, for the spiritual welfare, of that guilty world for which Christ died.

III. With the love of God, are intimately connected the principle and habit of *devotion* to our heavenly Father. It is probable that many persons, who deny the Deity of Jesus Christ, have a "zeal of God," but "not according to knowledge."^a In degrading their Saviour to the level of a creature, they imagine that they do honour to the Father who sent him; and they even conceive themselves to be the only consistent worshippers of the true and living God. One would think that such persons might derive a useful lesson from the history of the Jews, many of whom, at the Christian era, carried the same notions and feelings to a far greater excess. Their language was, "We have one Father, even God;"^b and they were enraged by our Lord's assumption of the Divine character. "For a good work," said they, "we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."^c Finally, it was for this very crime, as they deemed it, that they inflicted on our Redeemer the death of the cross. Yet who is not aware, that true godliness, in that day, was to be found, not amongst these high professors of a belief in the unity of Jehovah, but amongst the persecuted followers and *worshippers* of Christ? The experience of the primitive believers, and the history of their Jewish enemies, alike confirm the truth of those maxims of the gospel, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."^d "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."^e "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath *both* the Father and the Son."^f

The apostle Paul, while under the bondage of the law, and a persecutor of the church, was filled with zeal for what he deemed to be the honour of Jehovah, but we cannot read his history or his writings, without perceiving, that after his conversion to faith in a Divine Saviour, his godliness was, in a wonderful degree, deepened, elevated, and purified. And so it is in the present day. The most devotional frame of character, the most unreserved surrender of the soul to the will of its Creator the most abiding

^a Rom. x. 2.

^b John viii. 41.

^c John x. 33.

^d John v. 23.

^e 1 John ii. 23.

^f 2 John 9.

pursuit of his glory, are ever found connected with the most exalted views of the person of his Son.

There is no Christian duty more clearly enjoined upon us in Scripture, than that of prayer : and to the performance of this duty, it is a vast encouragement that we are invited to pray in the *name of Jesus* ; that is, in *dependence on his mediation*. Such a dependence is impossible, if we regard him only as a man. But if we plead his name, in simple reliance on his *Divinity*, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall find that free access to the throne of grace, which will animate us in all our devotions, and gradually form in us the mind of prayer.

IV. True morality may be defined, as consisting in the fulfilment of all our personal and relative duties ; not only to ourselves, and to our neighbour, but also to God. Now, although the doctrine of the Deity of Christ is inseparably connected with that of his *oneness* with the Father, yet in revealing the *Son of God* who took our nature upon him—our crucified Redeemer, our risen Lord, our Advocate, our Governor, and our Judge—the gospel has unfolded to us a *new and peculiar relation*. This relation calls for a corresponding line of duty ; and by duty we mean right affections, as well as right actions.

In order to fulfil the just demands of the moral law of Christianity, it is plain that we must bring into exercise towards our Saviour, the affections of profound reverence, ardent love and gratitude, and unqualified faith and submission ; and these affections must find their way into that practical result, which so conspicuously distinguished the apostles and their followers, a life of self-renunciation for Christ's sake, a life devoted to his service, and in all things directed to his glory. Such affections and such a life, include or rather constitute the worship of Christ. And let it be remembered that this worship, while it is religious and Divine in its nature, *answers to his peculiar relative position in the economy of grace and salvation*. As such, it is consistent with the will, and ever tends to the glory, of the FATHER. “ God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.”^a

^a Phil. ii. 9—11.

Now, it is plainly impossible that we should thus fulfil our moral obligations towards Jesus Christ, unless we form correct views of his nature and character ; unless we accept him, not only as MAN, but as GOD.

Since, then, that faith in Christ by which we are saved, is also the faith by which we are regenerated ; since a belief in the Deity and atonement of the Son of God affords the strongest of motives to humility, love to God, love to man, devotion, prayer, and the fulfilment of our duties towards Christ himself, we may safely conclude that such a belief is essential to the *formation of the Christian character*. Now, although that character may, in various respects, differ from the theories of virtue which have been proposed to mankind by uninspired philosophy, it contains all that is substantially excellent, all that works well in practice, all that truly tends to the glory of the Creator, and to the welfare and happiness of mankind.

Finally, let it never be forgotten, that the formation of the Christian's character is the very thing which prepares us for the *enjoyment of the Christian's heaven*. If we are asked in what the happiness of heaven consists, we may answer, on the authority of Scripture, In the unmixed service of God, even our Father ;^a in those full influences of the Holy Ghost, of which his present work is the earnest ;^b and in the perpetual presence and favour of the Son our Saviour.^c If then we desire, at the close of our mortal pilgrimage, to join the countless company of God's redeemed children, we must seek, with all diligence, for a *capacity* to unite in their eternal song of thanksgiving and praise—" Salvation to OUR GOD which sitteth upon the throne, and unto THE LAMB."^d

^a Rev. vii. 15.

^b 2 Cor. i. 22. v. 5. Eph. i. 14.

^c John xiv. 3. xvii. 24. Phil. i. 23.

^d Rev. vii. 10.